

Gromyko Says Pullback Is Key to Peace

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UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., July 18—Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko said in a letter to the Security Council today that withdrawal of Israeli troops is essential to "remove the danger of a renewal of hostilities in the Middle East."

Recent clashes in the Suez Canal area were provoked by Israel, Gromyko said. Such clashes "are extremely dangerous and could grow into a wider military conflict."

[An Israeli military communiqué charged that the Egyptians fired a mortar shell across the canal today, apparently in an attempt to hit an Israeli half-track north of El Qantara. There were no casualties reported. It was the first reported violation since the United Nations, after last

Saturday's heavy fighting, arranged a new cease-fire.]

Gromyko's letter did not ask for a council meeting. It was interpreted by Western diplomats, however, as a Soviet effort to pave the way for renewed Security Council consideration of the Middle East conflict.

A similar letter was sent tonight to General Assembly President Abdul Rahman Arifwah of Pakistan.

This was the first public acknowledgement for several weeks of Gromyko's continued presence in New York. He has been here since the first meeting on June 17 of the emergency special session of the General Assembly called at Soviet request.

Gromyko is understood to have spent most of his time consulting with Arab diplomats here, although he seems to have made little headway in

persuading them—if that was his intention—to relax their rigid opposition to any sort of assembly resolution the West would accept.

American Ambassador Arthur J. Goldberg and Anatoly F. Dobrynin, Soviet ambassador in Washington, conferred here again yesterday on Middle East issues but reportedly with no agreement. The Soviet Union has insisted unsuccessfully on unconditional Israeli withdrawal.

Some diplomats viewed Gromyko's letter as a final effort to impel a compromise resolution in the assembly. But others regarded it as more designed to elicit gratitude from the Arabs, which is about all the Russians can now hope to win.

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The letter may have been a gesture related to the sources say to the

cluded visit to Moscow of Algerian President Hourari Boumediene and Iraqi President Abdel Rahman Arif, who represent the more militant Arab faction.

The Assembly is in recess until Thursday. A further Soviet meeting with Latin American delegations has failed to produce a compromise between the Soviet wish for troop withdrawal and the Latin American insistence that withdrawal be accompanied by Arab renunciations of belligerency.

The United Nations, meanwhile, strengthened its observer teams on both sides of the Suez Canal. A cable today from Gen. Odd Bull, chief of staff of the U.N. Truce Supervision Organization said that seven observers are now based at Ismailia on the west side of the canal. The government maintained its boats have been launched in the waterway and have patrolled along the

been deliberately fuzzy as to what constitutes the cease-fire line, so as to increase the deterrent effect of the observers on all military activities including the launching of boats in the Canal.

Although the Israelis contend that the cease-fire line runs down the middle of the Canal, Secretary General Thant is believed to feel that it must be along the east bank. This interpretation would give substance to Egyptian complaints about Israeli boat-launchings as cease-fire violations.

[United Press International reported that Israeli officials in Jerusalem warned today Israel would fight if necessary to defend its boats in the Canal. The government maintained its boats have been launched in the waterway and have patrolled along the